

September 10, 2019

The Honorable Bernard C. "Jack" Young
Office of the Mayor
City Hall, Room 250
100 N. Holliday St.
Baltimore, MD 21202

Commissioner Michael Harrison
Baltimore Police Department
601 East Fayette Street
Baltimore, MD 21202

Mayor Young and Commissioner Harrison:

Addressing the violent crime crisis is the single most urgent issue facing Baltimore City. People who live in Baltimore don't feel safe in their own neighborhoods, and citizens all across the state are outraged by the daily reports of rampant violence. This year, homicides are up 21% and non-fatal shootings are up 26%.

While your new *Crime Reduction Strategy* takes some important steps in the right direction, much of what you are proposing represents the status quo and is already being done or has been tried before. The state is already doing much of what you recently requested us to do, and we are prepared to do even more. You have inherited a difficult situation, but now is the time to show the people of the city that we are all serious about stopping this deadly violence and getting shooters off of the streets. This must be the focus of our collective efforts.

Accountability for Violent Crime Reduction

While there is no single solution to this crisis, no strategy will work without a real commitment to accountability and transparency. The citizens of Baltimore are most concerned about the dramatic rise in homicides and shootings, yet the city currently has no clear goals in place for the reduction of violent crime. Taxpayers should be able to track your progress and measure whether what you are doing is working.

We urge you to set aggressive but achievable benchmarks for violent crime reduction, beginning with getting homicides back down below 200 per year. This is not an unrealistic target and would bring the city back to the levels of less than a decade ago.

In 2011, there were 197 homicides in Baltimore City. By many measures, the city should be even better positioned today to tackle its violent crime problem. Since 2011, the total Baltimore Police Department (BPD) budget has increased by 47%. Unemployment has been cut by more than half to 3.8%, and the median household income has increased by 21.7%.

While your *Crime Reduction Strategy* recognizes the importance of establishing some targets, we believe you should be unequivocal in setting more aggressive benchmarks. For example, your plan establishes a goal of having a clearance rate greater than 40% for solving homicides. Maryland's average is 60%, which is similar to the national average. Baltimore City should set as a goal a clearance rate of 60% as well.

Citizens should be able to track the progress you are making. This can be accomplished by clearly establishing specific reduction goals and by releasing quarterly data for each of the following categories:

- Homicides
- Violent Crime
- Property Crime
- Other Crime
- Non-Fatal Shootings
- Firearms Related Offenses

Tougher Sentences for Repeat Violent Offenders

The criminals responsible for most of these senseless killings in Baltimore City are repeat violent offenders. So far this year, 82% of homicide suspects had prior criminal records with a staggering average of nearly nine prior arrests. More than half of homicide suspects had at least one prior arrest for a violent offense and over 40% had previously been arrested for a gun crime.

Currently in Baltimore City, repeat violent offenders who commit crimes with a gun often get a slap on the wrist and are released back out on to the streets to commit yet another violent felony with a gun. This should not be acceptable to anyone.

This year, as you know, we put a bill before the legislature to require tougher sentencing for repeat violent offenders. Unfortunately, the city's elected leaders and lawmakers refused to support this and failed to take actions that would help get the shooters and most violent criminals off our streets and behind bars.

During the 2020 legislative session, our administration will introduce expanded proposals to toughen penalties for first-time and repeat offenders who use guns to commit crimes. Your support is crucial to getting these important measures passed. Without that, many of these other proposed steps will be in vain.

New Air Support

We are aware of the Baltimore Community Support Program, often referred to as the “Eye in the Sky,” which is estimated to be able to reduce crime by 20–30% in the first year by a combination of gathering evidence and deterring criminals from engaging in unlawful conduct. We understand that this has been offered at no cost to Baltimore for up to three years. We urge you to implement this program immediately.

In addition, the Maryland State Police Aviation Command, effective immediately, will allow up to 10 Maryland State Police (MDSP) helicopter crews to conduct law enforcement tactical flights over Baltimore whenever their duties bring them into or near the city. This includes when they leave Baltimore hospitals following medevacs, when they are conducting training flights, and when they are moving to or from their headquarters at Martin State Airport. They will provide additional support to the police officers on the ground and will proactively search for criminal activity or suspicious circumstances from the air.

The MDSP Aviation Command will coordinate these flights with the BPD Aviation Unit. Our flight crews will work closely with the members of BPD’s Foxtrot to avoid overlap and to ensure their flights are utilized where they are most critically needed.

\$21 Million in State Funding

We are prepared to provide an additional \$21 million in state funding for the city provided that you submit acceptable quarterly performance measures to the Governor’s Office of Crime Control and Prevention (GOCCP) and the legislative budget committees by October 15, 2019, and quarterly reports thereafter, along with reports on the violent crime reduction targets discussed above. This will include the \$7 million in requests you made during our August 23 meeting, as well as local law enforcement grants to the BPD and State’s Attorney’s Office.

Should you feel additional funding is necessary to achieve your violent crime reduction targets, our administration is prepared to work with the city and the legislature to reallocate some of the financial assistance currently allotted to Baltimore City.

Continued Record State Support

With regards to your other requests, the state is already engaged in nearly all of the activities you are requesting.

- Our administration has provided more than \$1 billion for public safety and crime control efforts in Baltimore City, including funding for outreach programs like Safe Streets and technology upgrades for the BPD.
- Through our Enhanced Visibility Patrol Initiative, state law enforcement officers patrol high crime areas in an effort to detect and deter criminal activity. As part of this program, nearly 2,800 warrants have been served and over 426,000 premise checks have been conducted in Baltimore City.
- As part of an aggressive, coordinated surge, the state collaborated with federal, state, and local law enforcement to focus 500 officers on violent offenders. This surge resulted in 3,300 arrests—including 259 of Baltimore City's most violent offenders—the seizure of 700 guns, and 272 gun cases were referred for federal prosecution.
- The Department of Parole and Probation has 1,848 positions in Baltimore, and we have sent officers into every single police precinct to assist the BPD.
- Our administration has provided \$7 million each year in recurring dollars to fund 75 additional Baltimore City police officers. We also provided additional funding for the city to pay recruitment bonuses in order to help attract and retain new patrol officers.
- We expanded Project Exile, providing state funding for additional federal prosecutors dedicated to charging Baltimore City repeat violent offenders with federal crimes in federal courts.
- We pushed for the recently-announced joint strike force comprised of more than 200 law enforcement officials from 18 federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, which is focused on disrupting and dismantling violent crime

organizations.

- We created the Maryland Criminal Intelligence Network (MCIN) to allow for better data sharing among local, state, and federal law enforcement to better target criminal enterprises.
- We successfully enacted tough legislation to tackle violent crime, including a Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) statute that allows prosecutors to better target drug traffickers and criminal enterprises.
- With the Justice Reinvestment Act, we enacted the most sweeping bipartisan criminal justice reform in a generation. It emphasizes treatment for individuals struggling with addiction and has reduced the prison population by prioritizing prison beds for violent offenders.

MDSP, Homeland Security, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS), and GOCCP will coordinate with the BPD to facilitate the necessary follow-up discussions to build and improve upon what we are already doing and how the BPD can better coordinate with all of our state agencies.

We will also continue to consider new initiatives and alternatives for the state to assist the city in addressing its violent crime problem. While we are committed to continuing to provide the city with unprecedented state support, the people of Baltimore City want and deserve results from their own city leaders. The time for action is now.

Sincerely,

Larry Hogan
Governor

cc: House Speaker Adrienne Jones
Senate President Thomas V. “Mike” Miller
Baltimore City Council President Brandon Scott